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ABSTRACT

Use of the writing workshop format to introduce creative writing in English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classes is discussed. The reasons for including creative writing and using the writing workshop format are outlined, and the author's experience using this format in three very different teaching situations (basic ESL writing, academic ESL, and basic communication for native English-speakers) is summarized, noting the student attitudes, use of rhetorical and thematic choice, drafting practices, and grading associated with teaching each group. Essential elements of the writing workshop are then discussed, including the nature and extent of teacher control of assignments, the variety of classroom activities, and classroom interaction. Factors to consider in adapting the workshop format to different teaching situations are examined, including selection of teaching models, course coverage, selection of language styles and organization, attention given to teaching and writing processes, use of teacher-student writing conferences, techniques such as writing buddies and peer editing, selection of writing assignments, and evaluation methods and criteria. Contains 12 references. (MSE)

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Workshops for adding creative writing to class #3518

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Original Proposal to TESOL:

This presentation describes a writing workshop format which has worked well for the speaker, and how to adapt it to different situations. Participants will be directed into addressing the issues that arise in this kind of teaching design, and will examine the role of creative writing in standard curricula. Finally, participants will practice and elaborate on different exercises which have work[illegible] in this format.

The workshop format allows for a more open student experience in writing, while keeping the structure necessary for guided instruction. Student choice is an important aspect of the workshop, both for the models to be studied each week and for the students' assignments. The presenter will discuss the different choices to be made when designing a writing workshop and different techniques for teaching a more creative approach to second language writing.

Some of the choices to be considered are the uses of a student portfolio, the types of assignments and genres of writing to be studied, how to manage error correction, and how to nurture both creative expression and the development of accurate language. Another area to discuss is how to incorporate creativity into curricula that emphasize standard rhetorical patterns, including how to adapt topics and assignments that preserve a rhetorical style yet allow for student choice.

By the end of the presentation, participants will have made steps toward adapting the workshop format to the different kinds of situations in which they teach. They will have practiced various writing activities centering on genres like poetry and short story, and have identified potentially corresponding rhetorical modes such as analysis and comparison. Participants will also leave with a bibliography of resources and a collection of techniques and activities for use in planning their own workshops.

Introduction:

The purpose of this presentation is to explore how workshops can be used. Workshops do not necessarily mean that we throw the book away; few teachers have that freedom. Rather, we must decide what objectives and approaches are involved in a workshop, and what kinds of materials and activities may meet these criteria. There is no one-size-fits-all workshop format. Instead, each of us has to examine what works, and what doesn't, in our own situation and for our own students.

Writing in a workshop changes the perspective on what a writing class is and what it can do. The teacher must adapt what we discuss here, just as we help our students learn how to adapt writing practices to the needs of their own situations.

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I. Justifications for using Creative Writing: Main Points

1. Rhetorical patterns have creative equivalences, and creative writing gives alternative, more realistic assignments. There is no ultimate "truth" to rhetorical patterns that necessarily ties us to this tradition.

Knoblauch and Brannon talk about the danger of regarding traditional rhetorical patterns as the way to foster writing ability: rhetorical patterns are better seen as "decorum," or proper style (1984: 32). Their book, *Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing*, gives an interesting history of these patterns.

In content class assignments and in real life, people are given tasks or objectives, not "cause and effect essays." Student writers must develop the ability to recognize aspects of composition like purpose and audience so they can plan and write for more than just an arbitrary assignment.

2. Creative writing is motivating, especially through choice, and can be a way of creating distance from difficult topics. Creative writing allows choices (in point of view, tone, etc.) which essays often do not. Writing creatively can ease students' performance anxiety and boost their willingness to rewrite.

Fictionalizing can be a way to approach something students are not comfortable expressing an opinion about. Students are adjusting to the target culture; an assignment to write two people's conversation about capital punishment can let students explore sides of the issue that a formal Persuasive Essay may inhibit. Creative assignments allow students to vent frustration with aspects of the target culture without being confrontational. This creative work could be a precursor to a formal essay on the topic, allowing students to explore opinions in a less threatening format, or just an exercise in expressing content.

3. Creative writing in a workshop format fosters a student-centered, communicative classroom, allowing adjustments to learning styles and cultivating attention to audience.

Workshops entail a retreat from the lecture-based, teacher-centered writing class where models are dissected and a formal outline and final draft are graded to see how well students approximate the given format. Workshops advocate student choice and exploration of ways to express ideas effectively; the most effective way does not always fit the textbook's tidy rhetorical pattern.

Workshops allow attention to learning styles: choice allows students to experiment expressing things in ways that the teacher didn't anticipate. This is also a break from conventional writing assignments, which means that as instructors we are not assigning yet another Compare/Contrast Essay on cultural differences.

The audience of a workshop-created piece includes other students, not just the teacher. This writing can then be used for exercises changing audience (eg., write for a friend, family, a character in a book . . .).

I have used workshop formats in three very different teaching situations. Approaching writing tasks as a workshop helped me adapt to the different natures of these classes, primarily to their different ways of

interacting with one another and their attitude toward writing in general. Here is a chart of the attitudes these classes had toward their peers and activities, and the variations we made in choice, drafting, and grading:

	Attitudes	Choice	Drafting	Grading
Basic Writing II (academic prep ESL, low advanced)	No hesitation. Edit, brainstorm discuss w/peers.	Topic w/in rhetorical style (they had thematic choice but not rhetorical choice)	First draft in class. Quickwriting. Final draft at home.	Journal, tests, grades on two drafts.
Writing II (academic prep ESL, intermediate)	No hesitation. Brainstorm, edit, discuss w/peers.	Rhetorical choice w/in given topics (choice of function, not topic)	First draft in class. No quickwriting. Final draft at home.	Journal, tests, grades on two drafts.
Basic Communication (trade students, native English speakers)	Usually negative when asked to peer edit, discuss.	Topic w/in rhetorical style (they had thematic choice but not rhetorical choice)	All drafts out of class. Some quickwriting.	Grades on all drafts (usually three), and tests.

II. Characteristics of a Workshop: In my opinion, the key elements of a workshop are choice, attention to process, and negotiating meaning. These elements can influence any classroom activity.

1. Total choice should not be given to students; rather, teachers must give assignments a framework within which students can select. By controlling some of the options, teachers provide guidance for the students while at the same time ensuring that the papers will be comparable enough to grade fairly.

In a workshop, "students own their time and have opportunities to make choices" (Gee 1996: 4). Workshops are flexible, but must be carefully planned. Creative writing here does not mean free verse on sunsets or completely open assignments. Students need guidelines and explicit instructions that, as the term progresses, can become more general and open along the old continuum of controlled to free activities.

2. The writing process is not static--classroom activities need to model different ways to get ideas, develop text, and edit drafts. Good writing can be learned because it is a skill, but there are different paths to take. Students must learn how to adapt their writing to their audience's culture, expectations, etc. Class discussion and a variety of activities help teach this adaptive ability.

3. Negotiating meaning is paying attention to one's purpose, audience, and tone to help control how ideas will come across to the reader. Effective writing in English involves many factors: clear organization; accurate language use; varied syntactic forms for focus and emphasis; well-chosen vocabulary and structure; and attention to purpose and audience (Hedge 1988: 5). A workshop allows the students and teacher to talk about how these goals can be achieved, letting students feel some control over learning as they discuss what they want to say versus what they have written. Students cannot always see or express the different relationships between ideas, or how to anticipate the needs of their audience (Knoblauch and Brannon 1984:

85); this is what we need to teach them.

There are criticisms of the use of workshops for ESL students (see Zhang 1995, for example), primarily because students seem to prefer teacher feedback and because some students' cultural or social background may make peer editing problematic. However, these potential difficulties can be answered with careful planning, as discussed in the next section. An important part of adapting workshops to the teacher's situation is knowing that some cultures (and many students) are uncomfortable both giving and receiving critical feedback and sharing personal information with strangers. Some don't trust classmates to give good feedback, and some feel it is inappropriate to be asked to write on others' papers.

III. Adapting Workshops to Different Settings. Factors to consider:

1. Incorporating choice:

A. Finding and using models:

A word about models: careful! Teaching from models can be like "asking someone to bake a cake by pointing to a finished cake and saying that it is devil's food rather than angel and two-layered rather than three" (Knoblauch and Brannon 1984: 29). Models can be used as points of departure, however, instead of prescriptive recipes. Students can be given choices such as writing a positive or negative response, synthesizing two articles, retelling it from another point of view, etc. They should not just copy the form.

Finding models (and avoiding copyright infringement) can be a challenge. Textbooks depend on a relatively small selection of articles, and allow little room for choice. One way to broaden the selection, give choice, and avoid photocopying is by assigning students to bring models. This can be done for exchange in pairs or small groups, for example, or by making one person responsible for one class. With the proper guidance (giving a list of suggested authors, for example, and careful instruction in how to use library resources), students learn a lot and find some interesting things.

B. Choosing what to focus on:

Depending on the rigidity of one's curriculum, choice can be included in what is to be covered. Teachers may have more options than they think. Below is a plan with choices in genres and models that worked well in an Intensive English Program. I controlled the topics and assignments, but they decided on the genres for models and exercises. On the first day, students voted on what genres to cover:

WEEK	TOPIC	GENRE	ASSIGNMENTS
1	Sound	Poetry	Prepare a topic idea; this isn't a contract! Bring something to exchange.
2	Description	Poetry, Essay	A rough draft of an idea. Outlines are ok.

		or Short Story	Bring something to exchange.
3	Setting	Poetry, Essay, or Short Story	A TWO page (min.) draft of your idea. Bring something to exchange.
4	Dialogue	Short Story, Essay or Drama	A full draft of what your project will be. Bring something to exchange.
5	Action	Short Story, Essay or Drama	Another full draft. Bring something to exchange.
6	Putting it together.		FINAL DRAFT DUE.

C. Choosing kinds of language and organization:

Again, depending on the school, there may be a range of choice. Rhetorical patterns come in many flavors (narrative, descriptive, comparative, etc.), and there are creative components to choose from (point of view, action, setting, dialogue, etc.). These patterns and components call upon different styles of language, levels of formality, and vocabulary. Helping students see these options provides sources for variety and choice.

2. Paying attention to process

A. Teaching process:

Demonstrating and practicing writing processes can be done through varying parameters for assignments. Variety is the key: do not teach just one process, because there is not just one way to write. Give assignments that call upon different ways to generate and shape ideas by offering different prompts, setting different time and place constraints for their writing, giving class, group, and individual work, etc.

B. Pre-writing, while-writing, revision: what to do in class and what to do at home

There are many ways to write, and students need to continually discover new ones. For example, lead students into brainstorming (with or without a dictionary), quickwriting, outlining through poetry, journal use, starting with their conclusion, putting off an introduction, dividing an assignment so different students work on setting/character/dialogue etc., writing board stories, strip writing, etc. (See Appendix.)

3. Encouraging negotiated meaning:

A. Making comfortable settings and situations:

Teachers and students both have responsibility to make the classroom a comfortable place to write. As mentioned above, this can be a challenge if students are unused to or skeptical of peer work. One way to help students adapt is to promote peer exchange as practice in reading and speaking as well as in writing. Make this an explicit part of the motivation for peer editing or writing, even through grading.

Developing trust in the classroom has many benefits. A cooperative environment helps activities go

more smoothly, makes students more likely to risk mistakes and ask questions, and livens up the class. Make students learn each other's names (including the correct pronunciation), origins, and goals. My first writing assignment is often an interview of a partner based on questions we come up with together.

Any student involved in self-expression can become tense. To deal with this, provide limited choice: let students choose partners sometimes, and change the environment to provide fresh air and varied seating arrangements. Model the appropriate behavior for peer work, especially editing. Editing activities can be anonymous sometimes, and face to face for less sensitive pieces. Students tend to be prescriptivist (Mendonca and Johnson 1994: 747), so teachers need to help them see peer work as cooperative learning, especially in learning to respond to one's audience. The teacher needs to listen in, helping when necessary, but not intrude unless students get off track.

One way to enforce peer work is to tie grades together: students get an average of their grade and their partner's grade, for example, or they get their partner's second draft grade. This is, of course, problematic in that students may see it as unfair or try to avoid pairing with weaker students. This depends on the teacher's style, the class goals, and how writing grades affect final grades.

B. Conducting one-on-one meetings:

Conferencing has many good points: the teacher is a coach, not a lecturer, and students talk more and get more personal attention. It is also time-consuming. One thing to remember in deciding to conference is to ask questions and engage in reflective listening, so that students are talking more than the teacher.

One way to deal with the time demands of conferencing is to take advantage of days with odd-numbered students: have individual conferences while the others are drafting or peer-editing.

C. Writing buddies and/or peer editing:

How and when to pair up students, and what instructions to give them, depends to a large degree on the assignment. Pairings can be with friends, strangers, or even triads that spend time on each person's paper. Depending on the class, these pairings can run the entire term (with attendant problems of what to do if the pairs do not get along) or be one-shot deals. I have done both, and to a large degree it depends on the atmosphere in the class. In general, I like to assign different pairings for each assignment, and even for different stages of one assignment (one pairing for pre-writing, another for editing the first draft, etc.).

Pairings can have different end goals. Sometimes groups may be asked to elect the best paper, to be read to the class. Designated readers (like a designated hitter) can be used to spread the glory and stress: one student's paper is read by another. Responses from one student to another can be oral or written -- after all, making them write on their partner's paper reinforces the idea that what they are working on is a draft.

Instructions must be practical and specific. Short-circuit the tendency students have to be judgmental by giving them specific questions to answer. Write on the board that they are to say something positive (and model possible responses) and ask specific questions for more information. Students need explicit academic and cooperative objectives (Bryan 1996). Giving them a content focus helps avoid overly critical attention to mechanics. Mendonca and Johnson (1994) suggest that partners basically summarize the other's paper; partners should find main ideas, identify unclear ideas, and give suggestions.

Collect papers after a peer editing session so that you can check the grammar. Thus, students do not feel pressured to make grammar comments. In addition, you can reinforce peer comments by circling pertinent remarks and writing "good question" or "I want to know this too." No one is born a good reader or editor. It is a skill to be learned, regardless of cultural background, and we need to support it.

IV. Writing activities (see Appendix):

Teachers must consider the final goals of the class: what should students to get out of the semester? What do they want out of it? How does this activity further these goals? Returning to the three classes mentioned above, I had to design classes that would be meaningful to the students as well as responsive to the course objectives.

In Basic Writing II (academic prep ESL, low advanced) and Writing II (academic prep ESL, intermediate), students were generally preparing to enter regular classes at a community college. I gave them journals with suggested topics each week, allowing them to choose the topic but mandating the length. For example, I suggested they write about one decision that changed their life--if they hadn't done X, how would their life be different? This followed a week of grammar on conditional tenses; thus controlling form.

Their essays followed the rhetorical modes mandated by the course objectives, but I gave extensive preparation and practice with creative assignments such as those mentioned in the Appendix. Their midterm was summarizing and giving an opinion any article they chose (after I approved it), and their final involved choosing one topic out of several, each topic having one rhetorical style as a natural way to respond (e.g. "Explain how smoking affects a person's life. This could be in a good or a bad way. What does smoking cause, both to individuals and to society? How does it cause this?").

The Basic Communication trade students were native English speakers learning a trade, and this was a required course no one wanted to take. They primarily wrote business letters (applications for jobs, confirmation of work to be done, etc.), engaging in multiple drafts that focused separately on content, organization, and mechanics. They always had the option to rewrite for extra credit. In teaching

organization, I emphasized the function of introductions, details, and conclusions. Students chose a kind of job to apply for, keeping this content for each different letter, and the assignments changed the audience of the letters. This made sense to them.

V. Evaluation:

1. Requirements must be clear and explicit in the beginning: what, when, and why.

Write instructions on the board, put them in the syllabus, and routinely ask students to explain the homework assignment to the class in their own words. Establish a routine (eg. journals are due the first day of every week). This is good practice anyway, but is especially critical for workshops because of the looser, noisier work environment.

2. Teacher responses should comment on both content and accuracy.

There is a debate over whether to respond to grammar and content in the same draft or separately. One of the best studies I found is by Fathman and Whalley (1990). It found significant improvement in content whenever students rewrote, regardless of teacher comments. However, grammar did not tend to improve as much unless teachers overtly focused on grammar problems (1990: 183). Commenting on both content and grammar in one draft did not seem to inhibit improvement in content (ibid: 185). Finally, simply indicating where grammar mistakes were helped students fix them (ibid).

Regardless of when and how you treat mistakes, make grading incremental, so that each draft is graded. Teachers cannot talk about writing being full of false starts and rewrites and then only grade the final draft. This sends the message that only the final draft is important, so students will only do final drafts (Knoblauch and Brannon 1984: 16).

Teachers cannot push the importance of content over mechanics, but then only make grammar corrections. Teachers need to respond to students' agenda in drafts, helping them to to identify their purpose and clarify the choices they have to make. Make it clear: the teacher's comments are as subject to being ignored as peer comments, although the comments should always be read. In conferences, ask students why they did not follow suggestions; if they have a good reason, fine. If they did not understand or agree with comments, that is a place for real discussion to take place. Advise, don't dictate.

3. Portfolios: The CRADLE Approach (Gottlieb 1995):

This article presents an interesting range of choices for portfolios, and does a good job of discussing the purpose of each style. Below are three of the six that best tie in with workshops, in my opinion.

Collection portfolios must have clear goals and criteria to be useful. The focus is on final products,

end of term; students are often allowed to choose what they want to be graded on, although teacher must set the number, kind, and length of entries to be included. Guided choice is an important part of a collection.

Reflective portfolios focus on students' reactions to ideas, events, and readings. Dialogue journals can become reflective portfolios. It is important to model correct grammar in the teacher's comments on student content; some advocate writing grammar rules in the margins if students regularly make a mistake.

Assessment portfolios are used to compare students' progress over time. They are especially good for drafts. They also are good for showing administrators or students what they have done to help answer the inevitable questions about placement and grades.

VI. Some Resources:

Bryan, Leslie. 1996. "Cooperative Writing Groups in Community College." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*. 40(3): 188-194.

Fathman, Anne K. and Elizabeth Whalley. 1990. "Teacher Responses to Student Writing: Focus on form versus content." in Kroll, Barbara, ed. *Second Language Writing: Research insights for the classroom.* Cambridge University Press. 178-190.

Gee, R.W. 1996. "Reading/Writing Workshops for the ESL Classroom." *TESOL Journal*. 5(3): 4-9.

Gottlieb, Margo. 1995. "Nurturing Student Learning Through Portfolios." *TESOL Journal*. 5(1): 12-14.

Hedge, Tricia. 1988. *Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Knoblauch, C.H., and Lil Brannon. 1984. *Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing*. Upper Montclair, N.J.: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.

Kroll, Barbara. 1991. "Teaching Writing in the ESL Context." in *Teaching English as a Second of Foreign Language*. ed. by Marianne Celce-Murcia. Boston: Heinle and Heinle. 245-263.

Locklear, Glorianna. 1994. "Thinking for Themselves: Students examine the writing group process." *Teaching and Change*. Fall.

Mendonca, Cassia O., and Karen E. Johnson. 1994. "Peer Review Negotiations: Revision activities in ESL writing instruction." *TESOL Quarterly*. 28 (4): 745-769.

Peyton, Joy Kreeft; Chuck Jones; Andrea Vincent; and Les Greenblatt. 1994. "Implementing Writing Workshop with ESOL Students: Visions and realities." *TESOL Quarterly*. 28(3): 469-487.

Vail, Priscilla L. 1981. *Clear and Lively Writing*. New York: Walker and Company.

Zhang, Shuqiang. 1995. "Reexamining the Affective Advantage of Peer Feedback in the ESL Writing Class." *Journal of Second Language Writing*. 4: 209-222.

Appendix: Sample activities and assignments

Poetry

1. Diamond Brainstorming (adapted from "Diamante," Vail 1981: 147):

There are many variations to this. I have also used it as an idea-generating outline for subsequent essays. Students must fill in this pattern:

Noun 1
Adjective 1 Adjective 1
Verb 1 Verb 1 Verb 1
Gerund 1 Gerund 1 Gerund 2 Gerund 2
Verb 2 Verb 2 Verb 2
Adjective 2 Adjective 2
Noun 2

This becomes the outline for a poem. They should use as many of these words as possible, but not be bound too tightly (depending on the level). This has been effective with students from intermediate to extremely advanced, and after the initial grumbling it goes well.

2. Pair Description:

This practices descriptive writing. Partners choose an object and write free verse which describes it <u>without</u> using any words normally associated with that object. For example, students have to describe a a tree without using "tree", "bark", "branch", "brown", etc. The aim is to describe emotional content by exploring unusual connotations. The sample we do in class involves short sentences with no attention to paragraph form, allowing students to concentrate on vocabulary. The class can later try to match the pairs, looking at them anonymously, do a peer exchange, etc.

Short Story

1. Board Story (I don't recall where I learned this activity, but it's a good one):

This is a collaborative writing exercise that explores coherence and cohesion. I dictate one sentence to the tallest student, who must write what I say at the top of the board. Then, s/he dictates the second sentence, continuing and creating the story. The chalk passes from hand to hand until we decide the story is finished (I usually make each student dictate and write at least once). Rules include no correction of the dictating student--write what s/he gives you, whether you think it is right or not. Later we correct and explore the choices to make in references, tense, etc. An example start: "I saw it in my rear view mirror as we pulled off the road." Questions to answer in the story include "What is 'it'?" and "Who am 'I'?"

2. Picture Files:

Students choose one picture of a place from the assortment spread on a table. Their first paragraph must be descriptive only, using the picture as the setting of a story. Often I do this as a timed writing (10 minutes of writing, no dictionaries, no stopping). The second paragraph of their writing introduces characters and action which disturb the initial setting. It is similar to a haiku format, but in story form.

Drama

1. Picture Files:

Students pick a photo of a person they find interesting from the assortment I set up on a table. They must invent the following information: name, age, marital status, occupation, hometown, favorite thing to do, pet peeve, something s/he did yesterday, and something s/he will do tomorrow.

I choose pairs of students to work together. They are their characters, and must write a conversation based on a situation given to them. Situations include: a blind date, being trapped together in an elevator for an hour, sitting next to one another on a long flight, becoming involved in a car accident, etc.

2. Date Writing (from the NYC Writing Project, Lehman College, via Anthea Tillyer on TESL-L)

This builds on the above, using the photo-generated characters in a slightly different way. Form groups of four and give them this situation: a man and a woman are on a blind date. The group will write their conversation and thoughts. They have one piece of paper, and must quickly pass it from person to person in order to write. One person writes what the man says, another what he thinks; a third writes what the woman says, and another what she thinks. After that, it can be acted out, polished, etc. Try it with other situations and characters.